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Observations at the Fourth Pan American Consultation on Cartography
12 October to 10 November, 1948

by Otto E. Guthe

A. Purpose of Mission

1. The primary objective of my mission was to observe and evaluate the reported progress within and among the American Nations in geodetic and hydrographic surveys; hydrographic, topographic and aeronautical charting and mapping; special mapping of economic resources; other cartographic developments; and the status of cooperation in these fields.

2. A secondary objective was to note any actions during the Consultation that might have political significance.

3. Another objective was to examine current problems arising in the field operations of the Department of State's foreign map and map intelligence procurement program.

B. The Status and Purpose of the Consultation

1. The biannual meeting of the Commission on Cartography of the Pan American Institute of Geography and History (a specialized organization of the Organization of American States) is held at each Consultation. The First Consultation was held in Washington; the Second in Rio de Janeiro in 1944; the Third in Caracas in 1946 in conjunction with a meeting of the Pan American Institute; the Fourth in Buenos Aires in 1948; and the Fifth will be in Santiago in 1950, again in conjunction with a meeting of the Pan American Institute.

2. The objectives of the Consultation are to promote cooperation and good will among the cartographic agencies and personnel of the several American Nations; to promote coordination of programs; to work for unanimous acceptance of minimum standards of accuracy in observations and surveys; to develop and obtain acceptance of standards in field and publication procedures; to obtain active cooperation in survey operations when appropriate; to foster the exchange of technical personnel and publications; and to give a mechanism for the interchange of knowledge on cartographic developments in the Americas.

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C. Representation

1. Representatives from all American Nations, except Costa Rica, attended. Delegates included representatives of several international organizations, such as the International Council of Scientific Unions, the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Society of Photogrammetry and the International Hydrographic Office. Special guests included renowned photogrammetrists from France and Italy.

2. In attendance were United States officials of the Bureau of the Budget, the Departments of the Army, Navy and Air Force, the Department of State, the Department of Commerce (U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey), the Department of the Interior (U.S. Geological Survey), and the Library of Congress (Division of Maps). I attended as official [REDACTED] Others attending from the United States were the Assistant Director of the American Geographical Society and a representative of the Inter-American Statistical Institute.

3. A list of Delegates, Advisers, Observers and Special Guests is attached.

D. Schedule

1. Plenary Sessions and meetings of the Technical Committees and Subcommittees (Committees on Geodesy, Topographic Maps and Photogrammetry, Aeronautical Charts, Hydrography, Special Maps, and Urban Surveys) were held in Buenos Aires from 15 October to 4 November, 1948.

2. An inspection trip arranged by the Argentine Government and attended by a majority of the delegates, advisers and observers began on 5 November and ended on 12 November. Argentine Army and Navy planes transported the group to Bariloche in the Southern Andes for three days and then to Mendoza before returning to Buenos Aires.

E. Technical Results

1. Although an official publication of the results of the Consultation will be made, there is attached a preliminary copy of the resolutions approved by the Consultation.

2. Some of the results of the Consultation are listed below:

a. Further recognition of the importance of obtaining a fully integrated geodetic control for the American Hemisphere with recommendations for more field work and coordination between neighboring countries.

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- b. General acceptance of additional common standards of accuracy in geodetic work.
- c. Requests for the creation of bodies to coordinate seismological and gravimetric studies.
- d. Acceptance of standards and procedures to facilitate coordination of geomagnetic studies.
- e. Acceptance of standard procedures for the completion and publication of topographic maps.
- f. Promotion of studies on the comparative value of photogrammetric versus classical procedures for determining elevations.
- g. Acceptance of recommendations regarding further specifications for the preparation and issuance of the Pilot's Manual, the Routes' Manual and the Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) for air navigation.
- h. Acceptance of ICAO recommendations for aeronautical chart format.
- i. Recognition of urgency in the preparation and issuance of preliminary as well as final Aeronautical Charts, Approach and Landing Charts and Radio Facility Charts.
- j. Recommendation for the establishment of a subcommittee on Fluvial Hydrography.
- k. Recommendation of the Subcommittee on Oceanography to study oceanographic factors such as salinity, ocean currents, oceanic bathymetry, marine sediments, etc.
- l. Acceptance of procedures and standards of accuracy to promote uniform tidal observations adaptable to extensive tidal studies.
- m. Acceptance of specific recommendations regarding the application of cartographic methods in the taking and publication of the 1950 census.
- n. Recommendation that mapping of natural resources and economic development be fostered by the governments of all the American Nations.
- o. Recommendation that each government establish a central office for the study of geographic nomenclature to promote uniformity of names used on maps.

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p. Agreement on need for greater uniformity, accuracy and detail in the mapping of urban areas.

F. Some Technical Observations

1. A definitive statement of the status of cartographic work in each American Nation will not be made here. It is expected that reports by the chief delegates from each Nation will be published at a later date.

2. The Inter-American Geodetic Survey is actively cooperating with all Latin American countries, except Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. The Chief and other members of the Survey (under the Caribbean Command) attended the Consultation. Delegates from the Latin American countries extolled the work of the Survey.

3. Brazil, Argentina and Chile are outstanding among the Latin American Nations in their progress in cartographic work during the past two years. Good work was done also in Colombia and Peru.

4. Brazil, Argentina, Cuba, Venezuela, and to some extent, Uruguay are showing some advance in the mapping of natural resources. The Bureau of Soils in Argentina is conducting excellent studies, including reconnaissance mapping, on soil erosion in the northeastern and central parts of the country.

5. The Map Exhibit was exceptionally good. All the Latin American Nations contributed examples of their best and most recent work. The exhibit of the United States Government was perhaps the best ever attempted at an international gathering. An international exposition of cartographic instruments was held concurrently in adjacent rooms.

G. Observations of a Political Nature

1. The Consultation was used as a medium for an intensive propaganda campaign to impress upon everyone the claim of the Government of Argentina to a sector of the Antarctic.

a. The badges and posters of the Consultation showed the claim.

b. Many large maps of the claim were on display.

c. A new map of "Argentine Antarctic" was being run off the presses when the delegates visited the printing plant of the Military Geographical Institute.

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d. The favors at the closing banquet were well-executed maps of "Argentine Antarctic" printed on linen.

2. Those attending the Consultation were given an excellent view of the "demonstration" for Peron on 17 October 1948. Windows on the fourth floor of the National Bank facing the Plaza de Mayo and the balcony of the "Pink Palace" from which Evita and Peron spoke were reserved for the group. It was clear that the delegates were expected to be impressed by the reaction of the throng of some 400,000 workers who were crowded into the Plaza.

3. Peron took active part in three formal gatherings and both Peron and Evita participated in the formal opening of the Map Exhibit. This backing of the Consultation on Cartography by the Argentine President is indicative of future governmental support in the work of the Military Geographical Institute of the Army.

4. One reason for the President's participation is probably the fact that the Army was acting as chief host organization with General Halbling, Director of the Military Geographical Institute, as "President" of the Consultation and Argentine representative on the Commission on Cartography. It was interesting to note that the only Argentine Navy officer regularly attending the Consultation was representing the International Hydrographic Office. This same officer was on the Protocol Staff of the Organizing Committee but was given little cooperation by his coworkers. The Hydrographer of the Argentine Navy did not appear until the closing banquet.

5. Chief delegates from the American Nations were asked to sign a communication to Peron congratulating him on the great support of his Government by the Argentine people as evidenced by the "demonstration" of 17 October. Among others, the Chilean Delegate could not be reached for his signature, so the communication was not delivered.

H. Observations on Map Procurement Activities

1. Mr. Arthur Biggs, Foreign Service Reserve Officer charged with map and map intelligence procurement in Latin America, arrived at his new post in Buenos Aires a week before the Consultation. He had just completed a trip of several months through Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. The Embassy at Buenos Aires gave him responsibility for liaison between the U.S. Delegation and the Embassy. He performed competently and was commended by the entire delegation.

2. He stated that instructions from Washington were, on the whole, complete and most useful for the performance of his procurement activities. More information, preferably copies of correspondence and transmittal lists, regarding the substance of communications between the

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Department and foreign officials after his contacts with them had been made would assist him in evaluating the results of his work.

3. He felt that the time allotted to him in each country was inadequate. He reported that it took days, in some instances, to properly establish a productive relationship with individual officials of Latin American governments. Little or no time was left to prepare substantive reports to the Department before he had to leave a country.

4. In general, he received excellent cooperation from these officials, although in a few minor instances, particularly in Peru, initial doubt regarding his motives was indicated. The local offices of U.S. companies were extremely helpful. Much valuable information on control was obtained. Several arrangements with foreign mapping agencies were established for the exchange of published maps.

5. Mr. Biggs had valuable help from the Inter-American Geodetic Survey and, through his Washington office, from the Army Map Service and fulfilled their requests for basic mapping data.

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